APHIS

Veterinary Services
Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health

Info Sheet

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Parasite Control Practices on U.S. Cow-calf Operations, 2007–08

Internal parasites can reduce the reproductive performance of the cow herd, reduce weaning weights of calves, and negatively impact animal health by causing symptoms such as anemia or diarrhea, and by causing immunosuppression which makes animals more susceptible to other types of infections.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) conducted the Beef 2007–08 study, which focused on beef cow-calf health and management practices in 24 States.* These States represented 79.6 percent of U.S. cow-calf operations and 87.8 percent of U.S. beef cows. An objective of the Beef 2007–08 study was to describe deworming practices and the use of dewormers on U.S. cow-calf operations.

From January 14 through March 31, 2008, 567 cow-calf operations responded to a survey conducted by NAHMS regarding the operations' previous evaluations of fecal samples for parasite eggs and deworming practices, including why dewormers were used and the frequency of administration.

Parasite testing

During the previous 3 years, only 5.7 percent of operations performed any testing of fecal samples to evaluate the parasite burden in their cattle. The percentages of operations that did any fecal testing during the previous 3 years to evaluate parasite burden were not statistically different across herd sizes and regions (figures 1, 2).

Figure 1. Percentage of Operations that Performed Any Fecal Testing During the Previous 3 Years to Evaluate Parasite Burden in Their Cattle, by Herd Size

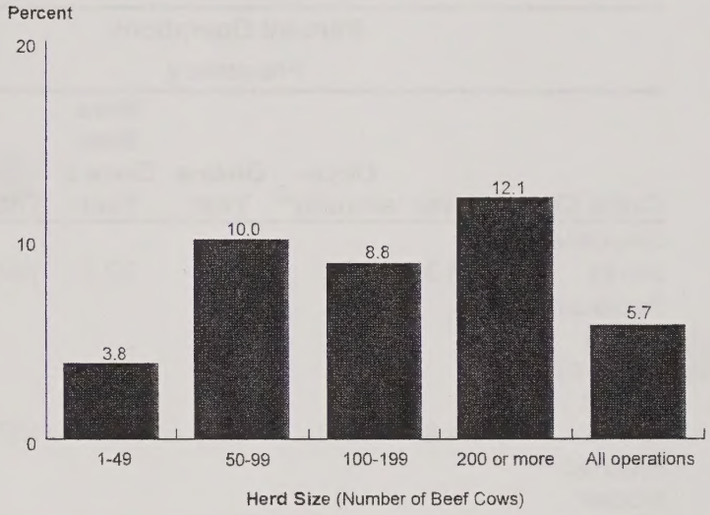
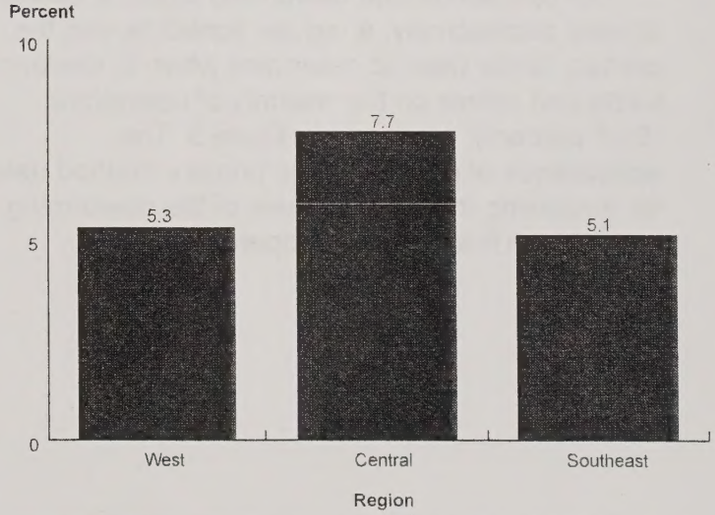


Figure 2. Percentage of Operations that Performed Any Fecal Testing During the Previous 3 Years to Evaluate Parasite Burden in Their Cattle, by Region



*States/Regions
West: California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, Wyoming
Central: Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota
Southeast: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia

Deworming frequency

For operations that had unweaned calves or weaned stocker calves, more than one-half usually dewormed these animals one or more times per year (53.7 and 54.1 percent, respectively). About 7 of 10 operations (69.5 percent) dewormed replacement heifers 1 or more times per year, and over 8 of 10 operations (81.7 percent) dewormed cows 1 or more times per year (table 1).

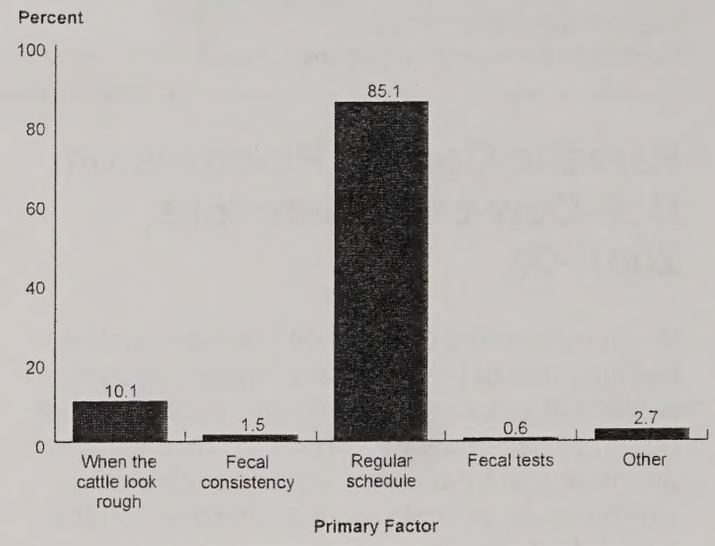
Table 1. Percentage of Operations by Frequency that the Following Classes of Cattle were Usually Dewormed

	Percent Operations Frequency				
Cattle Class	Never	Occa-sionally*	Once a Year	More than Once a Year	Total
Unweaned calves	38.3	8.0	31.1	22.6	100.0
Replacement heifers weaned but not yet calved	24.9	5.6	29.4	40.1	100.0
Weaned stocker calves	41.3	4.6	28.9	25.2	100.0
Cows	13.2	5.1	38.2	43.5	100.0

*Less than once a year.

For operations that dewormed cattle or calves at least occasionally, a regular schedule was the primary factor used to determine when to deworm cattle and calves on the majority of operations (85.1 percent), as shown in figure 3. The appearance of cattle was the primary method used for assessing the effectiveness of the deworming program on the majority of operations (82.3 percent).

Figure 3. For Operations that Dewormed Cattle or Calves at Least Occasionally, Percentage of Operations by Primary Factor used to Determine when to Treat Cattle for Internal Parasites (Worms)



Choice of deworming products

For operations that dewormed cattle or calves at least occasionally, about 9 of 10 (91.1 percent) listed efficacy as important or very important when choosing a deworming product. Additionally, over 8 of 10 operations (83.8 percent) cited ease of application as important or very important. Tradition was relatively unimportant in choosing a deworming product; only 33.8 percent of operations cited tradition as important or very important in choosing a deworming product (table 2).

Table 2. For Operations that Dewormed Cattle or Calves at Least Occasionally, Percentage of Operations by Reason for Choosing Deworming Product, and by Importance Level of Reason

	Percent Operations Level of Importance				
Reason	Not Impor-tant	Slightly Impor-tant	Impor-tant	Very Impor-tant	Total
Price	19.6	24.4	35.6	20.4	100.0
Tradition	48.3	17.9	24.0	9.8	100.0
Efficacy	4.8	4.1	28.4	62.7	100.0
Recommended by others	23.2	19.1	38.9	18.8	100.0
Ease of application or administration	9.9	6.3	34.3	49.5	100.0
Other	97.1	0.0	2.2	0.7	100.0

Summary

Few cow-calf operations (5.7 percent) tested fecal samples during the previous 3 years to evaluate parasite burdens in their cattle.

Most operations (86.8 percent) dewormed their cows at least occasionally. For operations that dewormed cattle or calves at least occasionally, appearance of the cattle was by far the most common means of assessing the effectiveness of the deworming program.

Efficacy and ease of application/administration were the attributes most frequently cited as being important or very important in choosing a deworming product.

For more information, contact:

USDA:APHIS:VS:CEAH
NRRC Building B, M.S. 2E7
2150 Centre Avenue
Fort Collins, CO 80526-8117
970.494.7000
E-mail: NAHMS@aphis.usda.gov
http://nahms.aphis.usda.gov

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